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with poems and tunes. What is most vital on this day is thus summarized in a Transdanubian fragment: 527

The mahaleb cherry is ripe,
Its twigs are very bent,
There is a young woman amidst its leaves,
Hug the one you love best.
I hug and kiss this one
On Saint Ivan's hill, on its summit,
God shall give us a slow rain
Wash these two together,
Like two golden twigs.

The Matyó Wedding

It is a pious belief that marriages are made in Heaven. 581 ● As we are told to believe this, let us do so; we shall have 101 time to see with our own eyes when we enter the realm of eternal light . . . The Matyó tribe are very religious and are a group of the Hungarian people who live according to a very severe moral code. (The inhabitants of the County of Borsod, who live in the villages of *Mezőkövesd*, *Tard* and *Szentistván*, all close to the town of Miskolc, are called Matyó people.) They believe that marriages are made in Heaven, but not in the sense in which novelists in general are wont to think, namely that a mysterious force, Love, draws the couple to each other. There is no question of this. Amongst the Matyós a love match is a rara avis indeed, of course the Matyós fall in love like everyone else: the earthly bonds of marriage however are spun not by love, but by their parents.

The Matyó lad, like any other, can visit the lady of 584 his heart, whereever she may happen to live — every single evening if he choses to do so — but a wife approved by

584 he may visit with «serious» intentions. Whether he likes her or not, — he may marry only that girl whom his parents like! If the boy disapproves of his parents' taste he can declare that he will not marry just yet, thereby merely expressing the hope that perhaps in the meantime the girl in question will be tied to some other person with the «heavenly» bonds...

• [581] Beauty does not count, the financial situation alone is of any importance. If the girl is ugly, which is fairly rare amongst the good looking Matyós, there is the standing formula of consolation: — «Look at her my son, she has a great patch on her skirt!» — The great patch means a great strip of land...

When the boy has been persuaded and has given in, a woman is sent to the girl's family as an emissary to take soundings... If the thing is all right, the boy presents himself in the evening. — «Well, did you think of something?» — he asks the girl in the courtyard. — «My mother knows all about it», — is her answer. — «Well, godmother, will you let your daughter marry me?» — is [576] the question he asks the mother: as Matyó lads call every woman «godmother», whether they know her or not, unless she is a relation or a neighbour.

[292] The girl gives her young man an «engagement apron». Its colour is black and its bottom is embroidered with glorious bright embroidery: it is a masterpiece of Hungarian art! Otherwise it is forbidden to show affection either then, or during the whole time of marriage: in Matyó eyes that is a great disgrace even in the fortunate case where the young people actually happen to be in love with each other. The betrothed also gets a shirt, another masterpiece of the Matyó art of embroidering; done with red and blue threads. On an agreed date the young man is dressed in his engagement shirt and apron. About mid-

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585 The centre of the wedding dances is the bride's dance: as we saw at the Matyó wedding, it must be paid for.

581 Payment for the bride, and a whole lot of other wedding customs, almost all of them in fact, have their explanation in the two ancient forms of acquiring women: kidnapping them and buying them. Tho this day the Hungarian wedding customs preserve many fragments and symbols of these ancient ways. Hunor and Magor, that is Magyar, the founders of the two sister nations, the Huns and the Hungarians, still kidnap their women according to the legend of the golden stag. Our laws of the 11th century vigorously forbid the kidnapping of women, and threaten the kidnappers. Later on, in a certain transition period, the punishment of girl kidnappers was not taken too seriously. The 13th century penal code of the Hungarian town of Selmecbánya prescribes that a kidnapper shall be punished only it the girl feels no affection for him. At the time of the conquest of Hungary — over a thousand years ago — the purchase of women was more customary at least amongst the more distinguished people. The Hungarian language still calls a marriageable girl a «girl for sale» and the literal translation of «vőlegény», the Hungarian for bridegroom, is «buying man». The purchase price of a woman was as much as her were-geld in case she was kidnapped; the highest price was a hundred bullocks. Amongst the ancient Hindus the were-geld was a hundred cows, amongst the ancient Arabs a hundred camels, amongst the ancient Greeks a hundred oxen: hekatombé. At that time the girl's dowry consisted of valuable furs: it was on account of these that she was sometimes called Neste or Nyusz, the former meaning marten, the latter sable. The two daughters of Leader Gyula, who occupied Transylvania, were called Karoldu and Saroldu, that is black and white weasel. But the Hungarian word «hölgy», which means

[1] See cat. 116, p. 110 — Analyst]

531 «young lady», in olden days meant also weasel, and the
[825] Hungarian word for ermine is «hölgy»-weasel. The people call the weasel «lady weasel» whether it be a «he» or a «she». In consequence of some atavistic survival it is considered a «she» to such an extent, that if a weasel, that is a «lady» weasel gets busy round the hen-coop a little hemp ball is placed in it, so that when «she» comes, she shall see her accustomed feminine implement and spin rather than harm a fellow woman! An even better proof is the fact that a whole series of Hungarian words, all connected with marriage, have become common everyday words on the basis of the word «menyét» i. e. weasel. Such are meny, meaning daughter-in-law; menyekző: marriage; menyasszony:
585 bride; menyecske: young woman. Innumerable symbolic
581 memories of the purchase of women are still alive in Hungarian weddings. They attempt to kidnap, or for fun even actually kidnap, the bride; they besiege her house, all kinds of obstacles are placed before the wedding procession, even shots are fired. The best men have to do all sorts of difficult things and they also have to solve riddles. — On the other hand, several things have to be paid for to this day: entrance into the house where the wedding takes place, for fetching the bride's belongings, for dancing with the bride; moreover women who help in the kitchen have to be paid, and so on.

585 In certain districts of Hungary the cock plays a great part in a wedding. A cock is led at the head of the wedding procession, or the bridegroom carries one in his hand; or cocks are made of sugar or sweets. — In other parts jugglers enliven the wedding by performing funny tricks invented for the occasion, in a few places we find beautiful pageants.

One of the most important events in a wedding is taking off the wreath, it is the symbolic ceremony through

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MARRIAGE

Winter is the season of rest for the tiller of the soil 581 — the season of rest well-deserved. It is also the time of merry-making and of marriages, the majority of which are held during the winter months and during Carnival. The barns at this time are full of wheat, the cellars full of wine; hams and sides of bacon are maturing over the smoke of the log-fire in the open fireplace. An air of hopefulness and contentment pervades the village. Boys and girls have worked together during the year from the sowing of spring wheat to the day of maize-plucking, and have joked in the spinnery and danced in Carnival. Romances have developed which come to fulfilment before the new working year begins. The girls who have not found husbands are teased in addition to being disappointed: "Shrove Tuesday has come, you were left at home, Carnival has passed, for you no one has asked..."

Among all the festive occasions of the Hungarians the ceremony and the celebration of the wedding are supreme — supreme in all respects. We say ceremony and celebration because however closely-knit the two appear to be, they are still two distinct things. Marriage is the lifelong union of two people, entered into according to the age-honoured traditions and rites of the Hungarian people. The celebration is the outward expression of

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581 the joy which the two clans of the newly wedded couple feel and through which they share in the satisfaction which the union of two of their own means both to the race and to themselves.

581 584 According to a wise old Hungarian saying, youth should marry, but the selection of a mate should take place not only through the eye, but also through the ear. That is to say, not desire and passion alone, but reason also should decide the choice. Love is a natural thing and a fine one, but parents know that while marriages are no doubt made in Heaven, they are none the less lived down here upon the earth. It is youth's privilege to love, but it is the privilege and duty of age to help to make a wise choice; and so it is done. The reasons for and against are carefully weighed, and the young folk, trusting the wisdom of the old, bend their fate to their elders' decision. If love is there also, all the better... There are as many marriage customs in Hungary as there are villages, the order and symbolism of which is the outcome of reason, experience, and, in many cases, force of time-honoured tradition.

Hungarian marriage is endogamic. Its motto is "same village, same section, same street", which really means that Hungarian custom favours the marriage of young people of the same religion and of the same general standing. This is in part responsible for the fact that in spite of the substantial admixture of foreign nationalities, the Hungarian population of whole regions has definitely descended from early Hungarian settlers, and it is also an illuminating example that the hierarchy of social classes is not unknown to peasantry itself.

584 Normally the choice of the daughter-in-law is the privilege of the boy's parents, after due consideration and the comparison of possibilities in which they often make